

**In the Claims:**

**Please enter the following amended claim 1:**

1. (Twice Amended) A semiconductor workpiece, comprising:

a metal layer;

an inorganic dielectric ARC layer disposed on the metal layer, wherein said inorganic dielectric ARC layer functions as a hard mask, and wherein said inorganic dielectric ARC layer has a substantially uniform thickness over topical non-planarities on the metal layer; and

a photoresist layer disposed on the ARC layer opposite the metal layer.

**Please cancel claim 4.**

**Please enter the following amended claim 9:**

9. (Twice Amended) A metallic stack for a semiconductor interconnect, comprising:

a metal layer;

an inorganic dielectric ARC layer disposed on the metal layer, wherein said inorganic dielectric ARC layer functions as a hard mask, and wherein said inorganic dielectric ARC layer has a substantially uniform thickness over topical non-planarities on the metal layer; and

a barrier layer disposed on the metal layer opposite the ARC layer.

**Please cancel claim 12.**

**Please enter the following amended claim 17:**

17. (Once Amended) A semiconductor device, comprising:

an oxide layer formed on a wafer; and

at least one microelectronic structure extending from the oxide layer and including:

a barrier layer disposed on the oxide layer;

a metal layer disposed on the barrier layer;

an inorganic dielectric ARC layer disposed on the metal layer,

wherein said inorganic dielectric ARC layer functions as a hard mask; and

a residual photoresist layer disposed on said inorganic dielectric ARC layer.

**Please cancel claim 18.**